

an intellectual life kept him at the University, where he passed through many grades and offices, and took his share both in the teaching and administration of the place. He was once Master of Balliol; he was perhaps Warden of Canterbury Hall. His reputation as a theologian increased gradually, but until he was some fifty years of age it was an Oxford reputation only. It is impossible to say whether he resided all the year round, or all years together, at the University. From 1363 onwards he held livings in the country, though never more than one at a time.<sup>1</sup> In 1374 he finally received from the Crown the rectory of Lutterworth, with which his name is for ever connected. There he lived continuously after his expulsion from Oxford in 1382, there he wrote his later works and collected his friends and missionaries. The Leicestershire village became the centre of a religious movement. Owing to the difficulty of ascertaining the exact dates of his different books and pamphlets, it would be hard to distinguish between those of his theories which issued from Oxford and those which first appeared at Lutterworth. There is no need in a general history of the times to attempt the difficult task of exact chronological division, such as would be necessary in a biography of Wycliffe. It is enough to know that his demand for disendowment preceded his purely doctrinal heresies, that his quarrel with the friars came to a head just before his denial of Transubstantiation in 1380, while his attack on the whole organisation and the most prominent doctrines of the Mediaeval Church is found in its fulness only in his later works.

The method by which he arrived at his conclusions was in appearance the scholastic method then recognised. Without such a basis his theories would have been treated with ridicule by all theologians, and he would have been as much out of place at Oxford as Voltaire in the Sorbonne. The system of argument, which makes his Latin writings unreadable in the nineteenth century, made them formidable in the fourteenth. And yet, essentially, he was not an academician. Instinct and feeling were the true guides of his mind, not the

<sup>1</sup> *fasc. Z.*, p. xxxviii-ix.